



Auto Consumer Alliance
13900 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Suite 100
Laurel, MD 20707

**Testimony to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
SB 883 – Commercial Law – Statutory Liens –
Motor Vehicles Towed or Removed From Parking Lots
Position: Unfavorable**

The Honorable Will Smith
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

March 4, 2025

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members,

I'm a consumer advocate and Executive Director of Consumer Auto, a non-profit group that works for safety, transparency, and fair treatment for Maryland drivers and consumers.

We oppose **SB 883** because granting automatic liens on any vehicle towed from a private parking lot would not only undermine the due process rights of car owners but tend to encourage private towing firms to engage in predatory towing practices that are often very costly for drivers.

Maryland did pass a law in 2022 to prevent predatory towing when police order a car removed. But abusive and unfair tows from private parking lots remain a common consumer complaint. While the state has rules about notification of parking prohibitions, maximum towing fees, how to reclaim your vehicle and other issues, consumers often find that towing firms and parking lot owners may not respect those rules – and either tow cars unfairly or make it unduly difficult or expensive for drivers to recover their vehicle (and the personal property they may have left in the vehicle).

These at least arguably illegal and unfair tows cost consumers hundreds of dollars, sometimes leave drivers stranded in dangerous places at difficult times, often prompt drivers to go through all kinds of time-consuming steps to recover their vehicle, and, of course, often seriously interfere with their ability to get to work and meet their needs until they can recover their car.

While most towing operators surely do their work fairly and legally, thousands of Maryland drivers each year have a very different experience. And giving towing firms an automatic lien on any tow – without any judicial involvement or showing that the tow was conducted fairly – creates a strong incentive for abusive operators to tow more vehicles, as the lien largely guarantees that they'll be paid the fees they demand, whether the tow was appropriate or not.

Such a law would very likely prompt more drivers to be targeted by predatory towing operators.

We oppose SB 883 and ask you to give it an Unfavorable report.

Sincerely
Franz Schneiderman
Consumer Auto